President Armstrong

cc: Dean O'Brien

/Dean Wonnacott

Cultural Center

October 11, 1973

Arnold McKinney

There is considerable anguish and hostility surrounding the present operation of the Black Cultural Center. The present arrangements are satisfactory for neither the minority nor the general community.

A review of the memorandums on the Cultural Center helps to bring into prospective the current problems surrounding the Center. Memorandums from the College focus on questions of space and allocation of funds for initial repairs (i.e. painting and removal of walls). The petition from the Black Students speaks to the plight of the minority person in our society in general and the minority student at Middlebury in particular. Neither group gave much consideration to the actual goals and operations of the proposed Center. If the present situation continues the Center will become a mere social space for the minority students and a place for occasional activities (dubbed as interracial progress) sponsored by the minority students for the general community. The space and the concept of a cultural center is much too valuable to waste in this fashion.

As time has passed and the initial excitement about the acquisition of the Cultural Center has diminished, it has become painfully clear that the Center is not workable in its present form. The Student Forum believes the Center is a regular feature of the College and therefore it should be financed from the general College fund. The Black Students Union (BSU) has been told that operating funds will not be forthcoming from the student activities fee since the Center is not a student activity. On the other hand, the College has informed B.S.U. that operating funds will not be forthcoming because the Center is a student activity. As usual, the minority community has been left holding the "bag" - - in this case, the building. To add insult to injury, the minority students are constantly called to task for not operating the Center for the total community.

The minority community worked very diligently last year to formulate plans for the operation of the Center. The current group is very forward looking and is anxious to have the Center as a focal point for Black Cultural activities in the general community. Unlike students at other institutions, the students have not presented a separatist stance; they want to be able to give something to the community. The position of the Student Forum and the College (Administration) is making it virtually impossible for the B.S.U. to carry out its plans. When the College accepted the plans for the Center some thought must have been given to the operations of the Center. I am sure the College did not build the Science Center without giving some considerable thought to the equipment to be used in the building.

RE: Cultural Center

As of this date, the Cultural Center is limping along on donations from parents and a church in Newark, New Jersey. The Center can work and it can be a contributing factor to the community only if the College is willing to take the Center seriously and honestly. If not the College is wasting money.

I personally believe that to operate the Center as a student activity is not the best approach. The Center should operate in much the same way as the Johnson Music and Art Building. An advisory board should be established to formulate and to guide policy for the Center. The B.S.U. would naturally serve as the nucleus of this board with representatives from other segments of the community (i.e. the library and appropriate academic departments) appointed by you. It would also be advantageous to have a College appointed administrator for the Center. The on-going functions of the Center (i.e. the library and artifacts room) should be budgeted out of the College's general fund. B.S.U. would submit to the Student Forum for funds for speakers and other one-shot programs on the same basis as other student organizations.

At your earliest convenience, I would like to discuss the Center with you and to plan for a future meeting with everyone involved. This is a serious problem that the College should take the initiative in solving.